

Abstract

An improved method and apparatus for vending products, and particularly beverage containers, of varied sizes, shapes and configurations without dropping or subjecting the vended product to damaging impact forces are disclosed.

- 5 The products to be vended are aligned in selectable ordered queues within a vending machine that can include a transparent front panel. A robotic carriage assembly using rack and pinion assemblies moves in positive non-vibratory manner along an X-Y plane in the machine, captures the selected product from its queue and smoothly transports the product to a product delivery port conveniently located close to hip level. The carriage
10 assembly uses unique product escapement and capture mechanisms to smoothly slide the related product from its queue into the carriage. Power door and safety lock features at the delivery port are also disclosed.

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